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President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

Agenda item 46

Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/54/133)

Letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/54/513)

The President: I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I am pleased to join the Assembly today to renew our common efforts to bring lasting progress to Africa. We meet at a time of change, in a spirit of determination to turn words into action. Since my previous report was issued, in April 1998, I have been gratified to see an intensification of the international community's engagement with Africa. From debt relief and conflict prevention to confronting the crisis of HIV/AIDS, Africans and non-Africans alike have invested their efforts with new energy and new ideas. Yet the statistics make clear how far we still have to go. Of the 48 least developed countries, the vast majority are in Africa. Of all the refugees in the world, the vast majority are in Africa. Of the children orphaned by AIDS in the world by the end of this year, over 90 per cent will be in Africa. And in Central Africa, we are witnessing the persistence of a war which has drawn in a large number of States and threatens to engulf the entire region. This is a reality that must be faced honestly and soberly by all concerned if we are to improve Africa's prospects. In short, Africa needs our efforts as much as ever.

The United Nations has been a partner in Africa's decolonization and development from its earliest years. Almost every agency and operational arm of the United Nations has a special programme devoted to Africa, and the Organization spends a great part of its resources on Africa. The United Nations is already broadly engaged in Africa. But it needs to be engaged more effectively. That is the simple lesson of our decades of experience with Africa. The question is, do we have the will to apply it?

In presenting my report on Africa, I identified three general areas which deserved particular attention. First, I stated that Africa had to demonstrate the political will to rely upon political rather than military solutions to problems. Despite setbacks in some areas, I believe we can speak of broad progress in recent years. I refer, in particular, to the determination expressed at the OAU summit that Governments which come to power through unconstitutional means could no longer expect to be received as equals in an Assembly of elected heads of State. Let me also reiterate my hope that the day will come when this Assembly follows Africa's lead and applies similarly stringent standards.

The international community, too, has shown a stronger commitment to finding political solutions to

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political problems, notably through new initiatives in the area of conflict prevention and in the use of "smart sanctions" to target the leaders of regimes and rebel groups acting in violation of international humanitarian law. In this regard, I would like to pay tribute to the ground-breaking work being done by the Angola sanctions Committee, under the leadership of Ambassador Bob Fowler of Canada, and the group of experts who are working to strengthen the sanctions regime against UNITA. They are helping raise awareness about the need to target those who are exploiting conflict in Africa for profit.

Secondly, I urged Africa to summon the political will to take good governance seriously, ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law and promoting transparency and capability in public administration. Since the release of the report, there has also been progress in many of these areas. Political reforms have resulted in a situation where democratically elected Governments in Africa are the norm rather than the exception. Constitutional rule and respect for human rights are now considered fundamental. Non-governmental and community-based organizations are working with Governments in addressing critical issues such as illiteracy, health and poverty eradication.

Thirdly, I called on African Governments to enact and adhere to the various reforms needed to promote economic growth. On average, African countries have continued to experience positive growth. However, a number of structural constraints and challenges continue to affect the potential transformation of the region. Among these are endemic poverty, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the debt burden and the persistence of internal conflicts in a number of countries.

As I stated in my report, the debt burden of African countries has to be substantially reduced in order for them to be able to use their scarce resources more productively. I welcome the initiatives launched to provide faster, deeper and broader debt relief through changes in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative framework. I wish especially to urge international financial institutions to take additional measures to assist countries emerging from conflict. Their resources are urgently needed for rehabilitation and reconstruction, which in turn will serve to prevent the recurrence of conflict.

If there is one area, however, that has witnessed a dramatic deterioration since the publication of my report, it is the effect of HIV/AIDS on every aspect of the continent's prospects. Of the 25 countries most affected by HIV/AIDS, 24 are in Africa. Recent statistics from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS show that now, for the first time, women infected by the disease outnumber men: 55 per cent of all Africans infected are women. The impact of HIV/AIDS on skilled human resources, already in short supply, has the potential to imperil any progress in social indicators. HIV/AIDS is not only a medical problem, it is a development problem. It is not only a national problem, it is an international problem. It must be dealt with as such, by Africans and by Africa's partners around the world.

Beyond these key challenges, I am pleased to report tangible progress in a number of other areas. In the area of children and armed conflict, a number of steps have been taken to ensure that the protection, rights and welfare of children are addressed in peace negotiations from the outset. Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has been strengthened, from preventive diplomacy to training and contingency planning. In Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Burundi, we are pooling our efforts for maximum impact. In the area of post-conflict peace-building, concrete measures have been taken, with the establishment of a United Nations peace-building support office in Guinea-Bissau; and another one will be established in Central Africa early next year. While the increased cooperation between the United Nations and the OAU has improved our effectiveness, I believe we can do better in our peacemaking and peacekeeping endeavours.

Our cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the Sierra Leone peace process and our continuing work with the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement offer lessons that we must apply in the future. I welcome, therefore, the attention devoted to conflict prevention at the current ECOWAS summit. In particular, I salute the ECOWAS moratorium on small arms, which addresses one of the key concerns of my report.

I wish to suggest three ways in which this meeting can have a lasting impact on our common aim of implementing the report's recommendations and turning its aspirations into achievements. Before doing so, however, allow me say that the priority attention we all believe must be given to Africa has to be reflected in the budgetary and financial priorities of the General Assembly. We cannot say that Africa is a priority, and

then deny the United Nations the resources to give tangible expression to that priority.

First, the General Assembly should establish its own working group, comprising a cross-section of African States and other Member States engaged in Africa's future. The Secretariat stands prepared to provide substantive support to such a working group. The group could usefully take stock of the progress made so far in the implementation of the report's proposals, and could consolidate and ensure coherence in the efforts to implement them further. Otherwise, the proliferation of initiatives threatens to create more problems than solutions.

Secondly, I wish to propose that the working group seek new ways of creating effective partnerships to reduce the rates of HIV/AIDS in Africa. Specifically, I urge members to lend their support to the initiative launched last week when, for the first time, African Governments met with non-governmental organization partners, with donors from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and with the private sector to map out new ways to fight the epidemic effectively and comprehensively. I urge members to draw on the knowledge and commitment of that coalition in their own efforts to make a difference in the fight against AIDS.

Thirdly, I wish to propose that the working group focus on new ways to enhance assistance to post-conflict societies, including through the cancellation of debt. Given the essential link between peace and prosperity, we cannot hope to achieve lasting development so long as conflicts go unchallenged, and so long as prevention is not made a priority.

What gives me confidence today is that African States are themselves more engaged than ever in taking hold of their own destiny and finding solutions to their own problems.

The international community has an opportunity to complement these efforts and achieve success in its attempt to ensure Africa's peace and prosperity in the next century.

The President: I should like to inform members that, in a letter dated 5 October 1999 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of October, requested that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of the Holy See on agenda item 46, "Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa".

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the observer of the Holy See?

It was so decided.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): As the representative of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), it gives me pleasure to state the views of Algeria in today's General Assembly debate on agenda item 46, "Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa". I am especially pleased to do so because the main purpose of our deliberations should be to define some general guidelines for the open-ended working group that the General Assembly decided at the fifty-third session to create. In a letter dated 4 October 1999, I requested that the group be set up in order to follow up the main recommendations of the report of the April 1998 report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Here, my delegation cannot fail to reaffirm its great appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan for his commitment to Africa, which is clearly reflected in his initiatives with regard to our continent, such as his 1998 report. The statement the Secretary-General just made and his interesting proposals with respect to the working group confirm that he holds Africa dear. We are grateful to the Secretary-General. I am pleased to note that the goals — the prevention of conflict, post-conflict peacekeeping or peace-building and the promotion of sustainable development — that underlie the endeavours of the Secretary-General are broadly endorsed both by Africa and by the world at large. But in our view, the main focus of the open-ended working group on Africa, as a forum for dialogue and agreement, should be on tracking the continent's overall development in relation in particular to the basic goal of promoting lasting peace and sustainable development.

In that connection, we are pleased to note that the establishment of the working group will have followed the rich debate of the Economic and Social Council at the coordination segment of its 1999 substantive session,

which was devoted to the theme of "Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development". The Council's conclusions and recommendations are sure to prove a valuable contribution to the work of the working group.

Moreover, the Security Council debate on the situation in Africa, held in late September 1999, also had elements that will certainly be of interest to the planned working group.

Because I addressed the General Assembly yesterday on the political, economic and social situation of Africa, on the many complex challenges facing it, and on the expectations of the peoples of Africa, I shall focus today on the working group the Assembly has decided to establish, and shall set forth a number of preliminary ideas on that question.

There is no doubt that, as it considers the item before it, the General Assembly is aware of the complexity of setting up the working group it has decided to establish. We consider that that complexity was in large measure the cause of the delay in setting up the group. The question is indeed far from easy, because the working group will have to tackle a great number of aspects of the African problem, as set out by the Secretary-General in his report. These will have to be related to the mandated roles of the principal organs of the United Nations, notably the General Assembly, as well as to the comprehensive approach to relations between Africa and the rest of the world, especially in terms of international cooperation for development, which it is the responsibility of the General Assembly to address with the assistance of the Economic and Social Council. In this regard, it is useful to note that the report submitted to the Assembly by the Secretary-General on this agenda item adds somewhat to this complexity. Submitted at the same time, in effect, to two organs — the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council — the report really falls much more under the competence of the latter than of the former.

Furthermore, it would have been desirable, since the report was submitted on 14 June 1999 and even though it contains elements of extreme importance to the Assembly, for the report to be complemented by an addendum, if for no other reason than to update it and broaden its scope, or by another report covering everything that might be undertaken with regard to the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations, following the example of the interim report submitted last September to the Security Council.

From this viewpoint, the reflection that the General Assembly is undertaking today will undoubtedly make it possible to clarify the situation somewhat and to set the working group on a clear course in order to gain the adherence of all around a mandate and an objective leading to consensus.

Through resolution 53/92, adopted on 7 December 1998, the General Assembly, in particular, provided for the establishment of a working group, principally in order to help it prepare for today's debate on the follow-up to the implementation of that resolution, and especially the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The Assembly also stressed that the working group would itself determine its mandate and its working methods, taking into account the results of the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council on this question.

Pursuant to the same resolution, and while endorsing the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the need for the harmonization of international and bilateral initiatives relating to Africa that are under way, the Assembly invited African countries and their partners to determine jointly their priorities and the order of those priorities, to define their respective responsibilities and to agree on realistic and quantifiable objectives in these priority fields in the framework of the 1999 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

Even though this exercise of identification and ordering of priorities and of responsibilities could not have been fully and satisfactorily carried out in the framework of the 1999 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, and even though it would appear to be a little too ambitious, it stands out as one of the essential elements of a road map for the working group of the whole.

As its mission is necessarily to bring together the efforts of the African countries and their partners in the international community, the working group must be constantly inspired and guided by a spirit of genuine partnership, capable of promoting dialogue and constructive agreement.

The action of the working group of the whole on Africa can draw inspiration from several general ideas as

guidelines for reflection. I would like to present them to the Assembly.

First is the political will to make a genuine and resolute commitment to accompany Africa in its efforts of reform, development and harmonious integration into the world economy.

Second is strict respect for the priorities of the African countries as defined by them, and the promotion of a sense of ownership and control on the part of Africans in the actions and cooperative projects to be carried out along with their partners.

Third is the idea of always taking into account the particularities and specificities of individual African countries in all general approaches to cooperation with the continent.

Fourth is respect for the pace that best suits the countries of Africa when it comes to reforms and restructuring in order to enable them to adapt to the requirements of change brought about by the acceleration of the phenomenon of globalization without suffering great upsets.

Fifth is the necessary increase in the flow of resources to Africa to support the development process on the continent, in particular through official development assistance, foreign direct investment, concessional loans and the involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions.

Sixth is the idea of keeping Africa at the top of the list of United Nations priorities, devoting sufficient resources to Africa to have the desired impact without, as a consequence, affecting other regions of the world.

Seventh is the need for the international community to work harmoniously, cohesively and with better coordination of the many international initiatives for Africa. In this area, the working group could provide an excellent framework for exchanges of information, ideas and experience so as to greatly contribute to enhancing each partner's knowledge and understanding of what is being done for Africa.

Eighth is the need for greater coordination in the actions and activities of the United Nations system with a view to greater efficiency, cohesion and complementarity. The action to that end undertaken by the Economic and Social Council at its 1999 substantive session augurs well in the field.

Ninth is support for the integrated regional and subregional mechanisms in Africa.

Finally, tenth is the need to make a full commitment to Africa so as to help it rise to a level at which it can become better integrated into the world economy and thereby fully participate in world trade as an equal partner capable of contributing to the collective prosperity of the world.

In the framework of the general follow-up to be undertaken, the working group should quite clearly take account of the evolution of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), the final consideration of which is scheduled for 2002.

UN-NADAF, whose main instrument for implementation since 1997 has been the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, provides a framework for the partnership that Africa has chosen for its cooperation with the rest of the world. The mid-term evaluation that we undertook in 1996 enabled the international community to see the limitations of the international support provided up until then to the efforts of the African countries own efforts.

In his report of 13 September 1998 (A/52/871), the Secretary-General stressed that if his recommendations of April 1998 were implemented, they would have a considerable impact on the acceleration of the implementation of the UN-NADAF, including the measures and recommendations adopted at the time of the mid-term examination. In this connection, the future deliberations of the new working group of the whole on Africa could form part of the final evaluation of the UN-NADAF in the year 2002, and its contribution might prove highly useful.

Better still, and even should the necessary political will emerge more strongly, the working group might help conceive of a framework or programme to replace UN-NADAF after the year 2002. The working group would in this way broaden its scope to include everything having to do with international cooperation for sustainable development in Africa. In so doing, it would contribute to finding a single, coherent framework capable of imparting a new dynamic for dialogue and agreement between Africa and its partners rather than continuing to work through somewhat fragmented or even competing processes.

We believe it is a matter of the highest importance that United Nations organs become effectively involved in the implementation of the follow-up to the Secretary-General's recommendations.

The African continent needs the world's view of it not to be limited only to the dimension of conflicts. The concern raised by conflicts is obvious, but to turn it into a fixation, or even an obsession, will mean not doing justice to Africa, which is working precisely to turn this tragic page as quickly as possible and to devote itself to the consolidation of peace and sustainable development.

Moreover, the tendency to see the United Nations interest and role with regard to Africa only in terms of peace and security seems to add considerable confusion and threatens to have repercussions that would, at the very least, endanger respect of the mandates of the principal organs of the United Nations, especially the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Allow me to express our fervent hope that the General Assembly will fully assume its role and will take up once again its responsibility with regard to the development of Africa, thereby contributing to the preservation and consolidation of genuine peace and to the promotion of sustainable development on our continent.

This is what the African peoples are expecting from this Organization at this moment when humanity is preparing to enter the twenty-first century. Unless it wishes to lose its soul, our Organization must respond to those expectations.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to say how delighted I am by the presence of the Secretary-General, and to thank him for his important introductory statement, which contains important proposals of great political import for Africa and its future.

Almost 20 years ago, the former President of North-South Commission, German Chancellor Willy Brandt, noted in his report that the recasting of North-South relations was the greatest social challenge facing humanity for the remainder of the century. He added that while hunger rules, peace cannot prevail; that whoever wishes to outlaw war must also outlaw poverty; and that morally, it does not matter whether a human being is killed in war or condemned to die of hunger because of the indifference of others.

Just some three weeks before the end of the century, these problems, which were appropriately called attention to, still remain to be resolved. They are in fact at the very heart of the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871).

Since 13 April 1998, when that report was issued, it has aroused a great deal of attention and interest on the part of the international community, the United Nations system, donor countries and African States themselves. This is because our continent has become a focus of action in all fields: development assistance, aid to refugees and displaced persons, electoral assistance, emergency humanitarian aid and peacekeeping, to cite just a few.

Africa, it is true, has experienced the largest number of conflicts over the past 50 years. It has the largest number of refugees in the world. For these reasons, it deserves sustained attention.

Following consideration of the Secretary-General's report, the General Assembly, on 7 December 1998, adopted resolution 53/92. This resolution, which was the subject of serious and difficult negotiations, over which my delegation had the honour of presiding, noted with deep concern the proliferation of conflicts in Africa and the increasing commission of atrocities against civilian populations, in particular women, children and personnel of humanitarian organizations. The General Assembly also expressed concern about the serious impact of such socio-economic problems as increasing poverty. It recommended increasing the volume and effectiveness of official development assistance and tackling the unsustainable debt burden. In that resolution the General Assembly also requested its President, in preparation for the discussion of the Secretary-General's report at the Assembly's fifty-fourth session, to establish an ad hoc working group of the General Assembly to monitor the implementation of resolution 53/92 and, in particular, the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

This working group has not been established, and the General Assembly, even after the deliberations in the Economic and Social Council on the report of the Secretary-General, has not really been able to provide the expected follow-up. It is my hope that the working group will soon be established so that it can begin to work by January 2000.

We all agree that the situation on our continent is difficult and complex — but it is not desperate.

In addition to conventional, inter-State conflicts, there is now a new type of intra-State conflict with subregional effects. There are mutinies by factions of armed forces that begin as simple salary disputes and then turn into political conflicts. Certain countries have changed their border policies, calling into question the principle, adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), of the inviolability of borders inherited from the colonial period. There are violent clashes between opposition groups and those in power. There are armed civilian groups. There are problems stemming from the difficulty of controlling refugee groups along the borders between States and from non-respect for the civilian and humanitarian nature of the refugee camps and refugee settlement areas. These new contributors to violence, all of which can be seen in sub-Saharan Africa these days, deserve to be treated seriously and more effectively.

I am gratified that the Secretary-General has effectively called attention to the complexity of the African situation and that he has suggested relevant measures and initiative to deal with it.

The follow-up report that he submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session held last July in Geneva, and that is now before the General Assembly, deserves our full attention. The same applies to the progress report submitted to the Security Council (S/1999/1008).

My delegation is gratified that the Secretary-General has emphasized social development, facilitating trade and increasing capital flows to Africa, as well as support for the process of integration and cooperation that is developing throughout the continent.

In general terms, it would be appropriate to highlight and to commend the many initiatives taken in recent months at the bilateral and multilateral levels along the lines of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

As for the African countries, they have registered remarkable progress in many fields. Good governance, transparency and the rule of law are gradually becoming the rule throughout the continent. Various seminars and forums have been held in Africa and elsewhere on these questions, including on the struggle against corruption. The Rabat declaration, adopted last December by the African ministers of the civil service, stressed the importance of professionalism and ethical standards in civil service, as did the Accra forum on governance in Africa, held in June 1998. Regarding the issue of corruption, I would like to say that my country is in favour of the drafting, under the auspices of the OAU, of an African convention to combat corruption in Africa.

Many African countries have undertaken courageous reforms to liberalize their economies and to amend their legal and regulatory frameworks. A forum to review the competitiveness of African economies was organized in Dakar, Senegal, in March 1999, at the initiative of the United Nations Development Programme. All participants in that forum agreed on measures to be taken to create a positive environment for investment and to enhance competitiveness.

In the field of human resources, a plan of action was prepared by the agencies of the United Nations system targeting 15 African countries with the lowest rates of primary education and low rates of literacy for women. At the recent Algiers summit, the OAU adopted a programme of action for the Education Decade that emphasizes the need for basic education for all and for the education of girls and of refugee and displaced child-soldiers.

In the field of public health, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS has intensified its action in Africa, as evidenced by the meeting on international partnership in the fight against AIDS in Africa, held here at Headquarters yesterday and the day before under the auspices of the Secretary-General. I also know that the roll back malaria campaign in Africa, led by the World Health Organization, aims to cut the number of deaths from malaria by 75 per cent by 2015.

In other fields that are equally vital to the survival and development of Africa, progress has been slow, even non-existent, although the number of bilateral and multilateral initiatives has increased.

The failure of the recent World Trade Organization negotiations in Seattle attests to the major difficulties and obstacles in the way of allowing the interests of the developing countries, especially in Africa, to be taken into account in international trade relations. It is true that efforts have been made, both bilaterally and, for instance, in the framework of relations between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, to promote market access for African exports. Much

remains to be done, however, by the industrialized partners towards reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers.

The drastic cut in official development assistance and the structural weakness of domestic savings in most African countries likewise prompt us to recognize that international assistance should be considerably increased, both in quality and quantity, and urgently needs to be restructured.

My delegation commends the bold proposals made by the United Nations Secretariat to mobilize emergency assistance for the post-conflict economic recovery of 11 poor and heavily indebted sub-Saharan African countries. My delegation also welcomes the initiative of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to establish a body composed of high-level personalities and experts in finance and development, appointed jointly by creditors and debtors, to undertake an independent assessment of the debt sustainability of African countries.

The Joint Conference of Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Economic and Social Development and Planning, meeting in Addis Ababa last May, also urged the industrialized countries to completely cancel debts arising from bilateral technical aid for the poorest countries and to reduce all other bilateral debts of the poorest countries by at least 90 per cent.

My country welcomes the important initiatives taken by the G-7 last June in Cologne aimed at reducing by $27 billion the debt stock of the countries involved in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. This Initiative, however, should be considerably broadened, its criteria for access made more flexible and the duration of the alleviation process reduced from six to two or three years. In addition to these initiatives, my country commends measures taken by the Nordic countries, France, the United States of America, Canada, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, Belgium and other bilateral partners to alleviate African indebtedness.

As the Secretary-General clearly stresses in his interim report, Africa today, on the eve of the third millennium, is characterized by a remarkable mix of achievements and unresolved problems, of potential exploited and opportunities wasted. As the report itself recognizes, Africans are taking charge of their own political destiny. Important commitments made by the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at the Algiers summit and at the fourth extraordinary session in Sirte, Libya, attest to that. African leaders are prepared to recognize their mistakes of the past and to work sincerely together to ensure a better future for the African continent. I would add that they need not compassion for their situation, but acts of concrete solidarity. They need a fruitful, disinterested partnership directed towards action for development and peace.

These African countries need support structures for post-conflict peace-building. They need improved coordination of humanitarian action in the field and greater consistency in development assistance initiatives. They need significant contributions from partner countries to help finance the OAU peace funds and to ensure the success of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution that they themselves have established. They also need a rapid and effective response from the international community, especially from the Security Council, in crisis situations.

Security Council resolution 1196 (1998) on arms embargoes; 1197 (1998) on cooperation between the OAU and the United Nations in the field of African peacekeeping capacities; 1208 (1998) on security in refugee camps; and 1209 (1998) on illicit arms flows in Africa all deserve to be followed by action.

As we see, there are many fields of action in which the international community can make things happen in Africa. On the threshold of the new millennium, the international community should therefore mobilize itself in the framework of a new coalition for the financing of development and the achievement of a stable peace in Africa in order to allow the continent to share with the rest of the world the well-being and destiny of humankind.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the members of the Group of African States, may I begin by conveying to the Secretary-General our appreciation and thanks for his presence among us this afternoon on the occasion of the debate on the development of Africa. We know that he rearranged his entire schedule in order to be with us. We also thank him for his highly enlightening introductory statement, which will inspire the African Group to refine the draft resolution that it is to submit under this agenda item.

Mr. Morel (Seychelles), Vice-President, took the Chair.

For the second consecutive year, the General Assembly is considering the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflicts and the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871). That report, which has been unanimously praised because of its relevance, clarity of analysis and realism regarding the actions proposed, has been discussed at length and in depth in the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. It was the subject of a high-level seminar held in Yaoundé under the auspices of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The records of the seminar have been published as an official document of the current session of the General Assembly under the symbol A/54/209.

For Africa, the time for the implementation of the priority recommendations has come. It is high time, as the Secretary-General has just said, that words were translated into action. Everything calls on us to do so.

As the Assembly knows, despite some glimmers of political and economic hope in recent years, Africa does not always behave well. Debt, wars, hunger, poverty, AIDS — Africa has been spared none or almost none of the things that destabilize.

I wish once again to congratulate the Secretary-General on the quality of his progress report, which clears the way for an efficient policy: governance, social development, the elimination of discrimination against women, development, trade, financial resources and regional cooperation.

I also wish to point out that this report comes out in a double context: on one hand, there is the ongoing decline in resources for operational activities, and on the other hand, we have the involvement of large numbers of institutions within and outside the United Nations in development activities.

The priorities we face in connection with the situation in Africa relate indisputably to peace and development. The first priority is peace. In this connection, one must salute the efforts made by the United Nations to restore peace to countries torn apart by conflict and to consolidate peace where guns have fallen silent. In this regard, we welcome the decisions of the Security Council relating to the deployment of two large peacekeeping operations, in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The news of the deployment of 6,000 Blue Helmets in Sierra Leone has strengthened the hopes of the people of that country that they will be able to escape once and for all the nightmare into which they were plunged by the civil war that has bled their country white. The decision of the Security Council to send military observers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a prelude to the deployment of a multinational peacekeeping force, which in the view of all is essential for a return to normalcy in the country, also brings high hopes.

These actions of the international community must be strengthened, and they certainly cannot bear full fruit without the genuine will on the part of African countries to put an end to the conflicts that have plunged their people into mourning. Peace and security in Africa must be — as they are — their highest priority; and the international community must respond with growing and more determined support for the undeniable efforts deployed by Africans for peace on their continent.

Therefore, there is a need to reiterate the appeals already launched for generous contributions to be made to the trust funds of the United Nations and the OAU established to improve preparedness for conflict prevention and peacekeeping in Africa.

It is also appropriate to call for the implementation of a joint United Nations-OAU mechanism, in order to strengthen coordination and ensure better utilization of resources and follow-up measures in the field of training and information on peacekeeping questions.

The struggle for peace and security in Africa is also a matter for subregional organizations. Their role is crucial. We have seen this in West Africa, with the Economic Community of West African States. Thanks to the Southern African Development Community and to the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, all the parties involved in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have approved and signed the Lusaka peace agreements.

It is also appropriate to salute and to encourage the initiatives of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in East Africa. In Central Africa, the Economic Community of Central African States has recently established an organ specifically for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts, the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX).

It is now more necessary than ever to empower the genuine will of Africans to mobilize in favour of peace

and security and to back it with adequate material and logistic means, which only the international community can provide. Hence the importance of the support of the United Nations and its Member States for our first priority: peace and security in Africa.

The second priority is the implementation of actions that could lead to sustainable development in Africa. There can be no sustainable development without the elimination of poverty. This means meeting basic needs in education, health and water.

The efforts for development in Africa are indisputable. The work of the people is well known. But paradoxically, the more Africa works, the fewer benefits it draws from its activity. The implementation of sustainable development runs up against three important problems: financing, coordination and the effects of pandemics.

What can we say about the financing of African development, a crucial problem if ever there was one. First, we must recall the commitment of our partners to raise the level of official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of their respective gross national products.

What can we say except that, in the second place, we must urge the United Nations to seek innovative ways to mobilize resources involving the civil societies of the developed countries.

What can we say, thirdly, but that a radical solution must be found to the heavy debt burden mortgaging the efforts of the African countries. The cancellation of up to 90 per cent of the debt, as advocated by the Secretary-General, is, in this context, a necessary approach, and all the more so since it would in no way unbalance the rich countries.

When it comes to coordination, what can we say other than that it is important and that it deserves careful consideration.

The question of development in Africa is both vast and complex. The United Nations became interested in it very early on, and since then it has been carrying out intensive activity, whether directly, through organs and agencies, or through attempts at harmonization, if not coordination, with institutions pursuing the same objectives. These efforts are noteworthy, because each organ, and each donor country, follows its own natural inclination, with its own objectives, logic, dynamics and conditionalities.

Development assistance, already fragmented, runs the risk of being fractured. African States risk not having their own policies any longer; their needs are too pressing for them to be able to resist the temptation to accommodate each potential donor. The priorities of the donor become their priorities, under penalty of the dramatic drying up of external resources. Therefore, we must strengthen the harmonization framework for coherent external assistance that allows each country to be master of its own choices and initiatives, which such assistance would support and nourish.

This is why we appreciate the existence of the resident coordinators, who work to rationalize the actions of all the branches of the United Nations system in each country. The joint work of all these institutions must be strengthened, and the activity of each one of them must also be given a new impetus. No one questions the need to revitalize the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in particular. But there is reason to be concerned about the reform process in that institution, which devotes 65 per cent of its activities to Africa.

The changes that have been announced here and there pose fundamental, twin problems, the first of which relates to the mandate of UNDP, an agency for financing operational activities. UNDP could see this function modified if administration alone were placed at the centre of its concerns. If this debatable point of view were to prevail, it would in any case necessitate the support of the General Assembly. The second problem is that of the reconfiguration and redeploying of UNDP's activities, which we hope would not be to the detriment of Africa.

The struggle against pandemics is also a problem for sustainable development. This is why the struggle against AIDS must be intensified. The guilty silence that too often prevails with regard to this epidemic is not the best means of avoiding the horrible reality. AIDS, as the Secretary-General recalls in his report on the work of the Organization, threatens the very existence of several African countries. More than ever before, the United Nations must resolutely lead the crusade against AIDS.

The third and last priority seems to us to be the establishment of the working group. It would be highly desirable, at the end of this debate, for the establishment and convocation of the working group provided for in General Assembly resolution 53/92 to be announced. The

group would be entrusted with following up the implementation of the recommendations formulated by the Secretary-General in his report, and its agenda would include the three priorities that I have just mentioned.

The various proposals and reflections heard in this debate will enrich the definition of the mandate of the working group.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): The report of the Secretary-General that our Assembly is examining again today appeared at a time when several conflicts were occurring in various parts of our continent. These included the crises in Guinea-Bissau and in the Central African Republic, armed confrontation in Sierra Leone and wars in Eritrea and Ethiopia, in the Great Lakes, in Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Angola and in other places.

There could be no better opportunity to delve into the causes of conflict in Africa, the means of containing them and the need to promote sustainable development in their stead. The complexity of the African situation resides in the fact that that part of the world has suffered many blows that have made it the most vulnerable and the most fragile of continents.

We know the ills of colonization, which systematically broke down the fabric of African society. Colonization provided fertile ground for inter-ethnic wars, causing bitter antagonism between African brothers of the same race and among dissimilar populations. It must be recognized that many current conflicts are actually prolongations of divisions dating back to that period.

The President returned to the Chair.

Indeed, if we were to characterize the 30 or so conflicts in Africa in 40 years of independence, we would see that almost all of them have the fact of colonialism as their starting point; it is not just border conflicts that bear colonial traces. Certain crises smack of colonialism because of the active and perverse influence of multinationals, of oil and diamond companies, of foreign arms merchants and so on. In fact, the idea defended by some that Africa should be compensated in the form of *pretium doloris* because of the immense damage of all types caused by colonialism is not so far-fetched.

Nonetheless, we share the Secretary-General's view that some African conflicts have other causes. The common denominator is basically political rivalries that are at the root of many coups on the continent.

Africa needs peace, peace commensurate with the trials that it has endured throughout the ages. But peace, as we all know, is fundamentally illusory, and above all it is a difficult and sometimes perilous quest. This is why the actions undertaken by the United Nations in this field, well described in the report of the Secretary-General, deserve the sincere and massive support of the international community. The United Nations misfortunes in Somalia remind us that organizing a peacekeeping mission is not a sinecure. It is therefore important that the United Nations develop its peace strategies in close cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and with subregional organizations — with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and in Eastern Africa the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). We know that this kind of cooperation, for example, made it possible to restore peace to Liberia.

It is on this basis alone, on the basis of unassailable stability, that our continent will be able to wage the only battle that is really worthwhile — the battle against underdevelopment — in other words, against poverty, misery and against ignorance.

Just a few days from the start of the new millennium, the question of the economic development of Africa remains more than ever a source of concern for us all. Having long theorized on the virtues of one economic policy or another, here we find ourselves at a crossroads.

How can we promote sustainable development in Africa?

It is vital that the African States break the impasse; that they stop speculating on the basis of expediency and, rather, completely take charge of their destiny. Development assistance is undoubtedly a necessity, even as it begins seriously to lose steam because of the decline in international solidarity. Resolving the African debt is certainly of prime importance, as is access to markets for African goods. Stemming the deterioration of the terms of trade is certainly an imperative.

These are all givens when we discuss the development of Africa and ways of improving its economic situation. No one denies this. No one calls into

question the importance of these indispensable parameters for development. But it is obvious that they alone are not enough to attain development objectives if they are not backed and sustained by the strong will to take charge of our own destiny. In other words, Africa needs to be aware of its own realities. It needs to determine clearly the direction it wants to take and what it wants to accomplish. Above all, it must be aware of its many assets which, if rationally developed and wisely managed, would make it a necessary interlocutor in the world partnership.

Africa does indeed have immense potential with its wealth of raw materials. With one of youngest populations in the world, it constitutes an immense pool of labour. Composed of some 50 States, it undeniably represents a market of prime importance. This means that while international assistance remains a needed stage, ultimately Africa must rely above all on its own strengths. This is the only way for it to deal with globalization, whose watchwords are productivity and competitiveness.

It is true that some attempts have already been made in this respect, but without real results. We have in mind in particular the Lagos Plan of Action, developed by the OAU in cooperation with the United Nations, which was intended to provide Africa with endogenous, self-focused and self-managed development. We also have in mind the Abuja Treaty, which defined the guiding principles of economic development that takes African realities into account, but it too has been slow to take shape.

Three months ago in Sirte, in Libya, in a sound initiative, the African States resolved to promote the genuine economic development of the continent on the basis of the clear realization that it is up to Africa to take charge of its own destiny, its own development.

It is to be hoped that this solemn commitment on the part of Africa's foremost leaders will mark the beginning of genuine, integrated, united and sustainable development in the continent in peace and security.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): It is quite possible that if one were to discuss Africa outside of these walls, among the first questions raised would be that of the seemingly unending conflicts in Africa. In other words, among the things that Africa is becoming known for is its wars. True, the conflicts in Africa are a serious matter. Yet Africa has more to offer than conflict.

South Africa is of the fundamental view that there is a basic need to understand the root causes of conflict. This understanding will assist us in finding lasting solutions to them.

Furthermore, South Africa believes that poverty is dividing our societies into irreconcilable camps of haves and have-nots. The inequalities within societies constitute the root causes of the intra-State conflicts that are now common in Africa. It is important to understand this, because when the United Nations was founded, more than 50 years ago, there was hope that the Organization would help resolve inter-State conflicts. Ironically, at the dawn of the third millennium, the United Nations finds itself addressing conflicts within States.

We in southern Africa have embarked on subregional economic development projects aimed at alleviating the effects of poverty. Our aim is to create sustainable development with projects such as the Maputo Development Corridor, the Lesotho Highland Water Project, the Lubombo Corridor, the Trans-Kalahari Road, the joint expansion of an electricity grid between Namibia and South Africa and the recently rehabilitated Cabora Bassa Dam in Mozambique.

My delegation wishes to reiterate that matters of trade play an important role in the attainment of the objectives of peace and sustainable development for the African continent. In this context, the lack of consensus at the recent World Trade Organization Ministerial (WTO) Meeting in Seattle is a setback for Africa. We believe that it is imperative for the WTO to address export issues of interest to African countries, especially market access for agricultural and non-agricultural products. Of equal importance for the African continent is the immediate and unconditional implementation by the developed countries of provisions for bound, duty-free, quota-free market access in favour of the least developed countries, the majority of which are in Africa.

Attempts to coordinate international activities aimed at addressing African economic recovery will fall short if peace and security are not guaranteed for all our people. My delegation fully supports international endeavours to resolve conflicts in Africa. This is why the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict in Africa is an important contribution to the debate on this subject. My delegation supports the proposals made by the Secretary-General today and looks forward to working in an open-ended group of the General Assembly to deal with African matters.

Despite the fact that many African countries have embarked on economic restructuring and liberalization programmes, most economies on the continent continue to be adversely affected. Amid a global economic boom, Africa's market share continues to decline. This is further compounded by reduced official development assistance and foreign direct investment to Africa. South Africa is concerned about the fact that official development assistance fell from $23 billion in 1992 to $18 billion in 1997. At the same time, we are encouraged that the United Kingdom and the United States have increased their official development assistance in their 1999 budgets and that Sweden has pledged to increase its official development assistance to 0.73 per cent of gross national product for the year 2001. Furthermore, it is most gratifying to learn that Norway intends to re-establish its official development assistance at 1 per cent of gross national product and that Denmark is already contributing 1 per cent of gross national product in official development assistance.

At the same time, my delegation welcomes recent initiatives to enhance economic cooperation and social development in Africa. To this end, we welcome in particular the signing and the ratification of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community. We urge all participating countries to create the necessary environment to give full expression to the ideals embodied in the Treaty.

In recent times, the Bretton Woods institutions have begun to design economic recovery plans that take into consideration the opinions of Governments, which, after all, must be ultimately responsible for the crucial implementation phase. This positive mutual interaction should maximize the possibility of the successful implementation of plans for economic growth and development. It is for this reason that we have been following with keen interest the debate within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as it restructures itself to accommodate the reduction in funding by donors. UNDP is the only face of the United Nations that people in the developing world ever see. Its survival is the best guarantee that the United Nations will continue to play a fundamental role in promoting development and alleviating poverty around the world.

South Africa believes that conflicts are the result of a failure to resolve disputes amicably and timeously. It is quite remarkable that Africans are now themselves involved in resolving conflicts. In this regard, we note the commitment and intention expressed by African leaders at the 1999 Algiers summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to exclude from their ranks, with effect from its next summit, all leaders who have come to power through unlawful means. This gesture constitutes a noteworthy desire to contribute constructively to the promotion of democracy and good governance on the continent.

In our subregion, democracy and good governance are thriving. For many years, Botswana has carried the torch for democracy in our region. In the last 12 months Botswana, South Africa, Malawi, Namibia and Mozambique have successfully held democratic elections. The United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe are scheduled to hold national elections within the next 12 months. For its part, Lesotho is in the middle of a transformation that will lead to yet another democratic election in that country. But this does not mean that only peace prevails in our subregion. The people of Angola continue to suffer under Mr. Jonas Savimbi's bloody aggression. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lusaka peace Agreement seems to hold hope for that war-torn nation.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to underscore its view that it is important for the United Nations to be seen as a body that seeks to maintain and promote peace in Africa. The United Nations, its organs and its agencies must assist in preventing new conflicts from erupting on the continent. In this regard, South Africa supports the need to strengthen early warning systems in Africa so that the United Nations can become involved before all-out war breaks out. All conflict prevention measures should receive surpassing attention, including preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and early warning systems. Conflict prevention is by far the most cost-effective measure we have to resolve conflicts in Africa.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We must admit that Africa has an enormous wealth of natural and human resources. In the era of globalization, Africa must proceed quickly but cautiously in a very complex international environment that abounds in opportunities and risks. The interests of the States of Africa necessitate that they be integrated positively into the world economy in order to achieve prosperity for their peoples and to avert the risks of marginalization, which could cause them to lag behind the march of civilization and lead to instability and wars that would undoubtedly affect international peace and security.

In this context, we have carefully read the report of the Secretary-General on development in Africa. That report also deals with the most important development challenges currently confronting African countries. We also listened very attentively to the statement made by the Secretary-General earlier.

Egypt believes that efforts for development in Africa must be based on two main foundations. First, international efforts must be intensified to create an international environment favourable to development. Secondly, African States must intensify their efforts in the field of social and economic reform, in order to mobilize the creative energies of the African peoples, thereby enabling them to keep up with the march towards development and to achieve prosperity for coming generations.

Egypt therefore welcomed the debate held last July in the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system with regard to the implementation and coordinated follow-up of initiatives on African development, which include the Cairo Programme of Action, adopted by the States members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in June 1995.

We welcomed the agreement achieved during the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) last September on the elements of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative; the majority of such countries are in Africa. Nevertheless, most of the commitments made by the World Bank and the IMF have so far not been implemented. On the contrary, the President of the World Bank himself recently declared that that important initiative is in a very precarious situation because the funding required for its implementation is lacking.

Furthermore, we were all looking forward to the third Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization, which was held in Seattle a few days ago. We had hoped that it would result in a strengthening of the bases of the multilateral international trading system as a result of a serious attempt by the international community to deal with the reasons for the failure of developing countries, particularly African countries, to benefit from the opportunities created by economic globalization and the general global shift towards trade liberalization. Unfortunately, we were disappointed. Regrettably, we witnessed injustice with regard to the interests of the poor countries. The conference did not even arrive at an agreement on exemptions from export duties for the least developed countries, the majority of which are also in Africa, even though such exports constitute no more than 0.5 per cent of world trade.

Egypt is sounding the alarm. We declare that it has become increasingly important for the international community fully to discharge its humanitarian, moral and political responsibilities towards the African continent. In this regard, I would like to reaffirm that the economic problems of the continent have been thoroughly discussed, and that international organizations, whether within or outside the United Nations system, possess all the information they need about the challenges to development efforts in Africa and the ways to overcome them. The political will is thus urgently needed to promote the coordination and effectiveness of all efforts so that they can become harmonious with development priorities as determined and developed by the African States.

Necessary international resources for the implementation of the programmes and projects agreed upon are also required, together with the establishment of a constructive partnership between Governments, international institutions, the private sector and civil society institutions in an integrated system capable of achieving all aspects of development.

In this regard, I cannot fail to reaffirm my belief that this is the only way to avert further economic marginalization, political instability, internal conflicts and conflicts between States. The countries of the African continent have made great efforts to achieve further economic integration among themselves through the implementation of the Abuja Treaty, which has led to the creation of promising economic groupings, including the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Here I would like to affirm the fundamental role that could be played by the private sector in the development process and in promoting the production and export of basic commodities, both manufactured and agricultural goods, in Africa. I would like to take this opportunity to point out that Egypt will organize a conference for business people of the States members of COMESA in February 2000. More than 2,000 business people will participate in that conference, whose aim will be to promote trade and investment among African States and between them and other countries of the world.

Africa is facing development challenges and urgently needs the United Nations to play a clear, effective and concrete role in settling the conflicts in its territories. Africa does not simply expect the United Nations to take action in containing the crises that erupt in the continent, but also expects the international community to take early action, before the expansion and exacerbation of such crises. In his report on the causes of conflict in Africa, the Secretary-General made it clear that the problem does not lie in the absence of an early warning system that can alert us to the possible eruption of certain crises in the continent. Rather, the problem lies in the need to follow up such early warnings with speedy and effective measures. Unfortunately, we have noticed recently that the United Nations has not been taking adequate action to that end.

The report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict in Africa contains a number of ambitious recommendations aimed at consolidating and strengthening security, stability and sustainable development in the continent. These recommendations constitute the basis for the consideration by the General Assembly of this item. They also constitute a broad basis for the Security Council's treatment of problems that Africa suffers from in fields that are within its competence. Given that fact, as I made clear in my statement to the General Assembly this morning, we wonder why the progress report (S/1999/1008) on the implementation of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict in Africa was submitted only to the Security Council.

The report was not submitted to the General Assembly or to the Economic and Social Council — or to any other United Nations body involved. This certainly gives rise to concern, not only because it calls into question the principle of respect for the crucial and sensitive balance among the principal organs of the United Nations as defined in the Charter — something to which we have made constant reference — but also because it runs counter to the provisions of paragraph 14 of last year's resolution 53/92. That paragraph requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in his report on the causes of conflict in Africa to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, that is, the present session.

Nor can we accept that today's debate on this broad-ranging item is based solely on the report contained in document A/54/133, because it is exclusively economic in its focus and deals only with development in Africa. It does not address security, political or other aspects of the situation in Africa. The General Assembly must address those aspects under this agenda item.

I wish in conclusion, Sir, to thank you for your close attention to the situation in Africa and for the keen interest you have shown during your presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session regarding the attainment of our continent's objectives. In that connection, and as mentioned by the Secretary-General this afternoon, the Egyptian delegation looks forward to your establishment of the working group requested in paragraph 15 of resolution 53/92 to monitor the implementation of that resolution and, in particular, the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. I assure you, Sir, that my delegation is always ready to cooperate with you in that regard.

Ms. Kaba Camara (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Since the 13 April 1998 report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871) was issued, many initiatives have been undertaken both within and outside the United Nations. This indicates the interest of all members of the international community in this pressing and topical subject. The report of the Secretary-General has caused a great deal of United Nations ink to flow, because it sought answers from the members of the peace and development community about ways and means to help put an end to conflict and to promote lasting peace and sustainable development in Africa.

In the Security Council, on 29 and 30 September 1999, authoritative voices expressed the concerns of Africa and what it expected of the international community with a view to putting an end to its growing marginalization. We heard the central elements of the situation in Africa and of the international community's role in restoring peace to the continent.

But in today's debate on those aspects of the Secretary-General's report that relate to the areas of competence of the General Assembly, we ought to stress the social, economic and cultural factors whose interaction could create a volatile situation that, if not contained in time, could lead to civil war.

In the view of my delegation, the most important of those factors which weaken the social fabric and the political cohesion of Africa is the economic factor. It can

never be said too often that economic crises constitute the main cause of conflict in African countries. Indeed, a brief historical review will show that African countries that gained independence in a peaceful manner experienced a long period of peace until economic crises erupted in various places. The upheavals of the 1980s — resulting from skyrocketing oil prices, the sudden drop in commodity prices, the debt problem and structural adjustment policies — created social discontent that jeopardized the established order.

Structural adjustment policies intensified frustration by making it harder to gain access to health and education services for lack of investment in the social sphere. Everyone was infatuated with multi-party democracy, which had seemed to be a miracle cure for the social problems of poor countries. But unfortunately, the promotion of democracy in the context of the chronic economic crisis that characterized that "lost decade" subjected the fragile political institutions of our countries to a severe test. It was necessary to manage the economic crisis while addressing the needs of our populations, who demanded respect for human rights, and in particular for their economic, social and cultural rights.

The difficult economic environment did not allow Governments, however strong their political will, to satisfy their constituencies by providing such things as universal access to health and educational services. To the contrary, severe cuts in budgets in the social sphere led to a deterioration in social conditions so grave that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) sounded the alarm and called for adjustment policies with a human face. Dissatisfaction led to the breakup of political parties, which in turn bred political ambitions. Those who were frustrated thought that they could achieve prosperity by holding on to political power, which provoked a series of *coups d'état* and social revolts, hurling some African countries into chronic political instability.

That lack of security has deterred investors and entrepreneurs from involvement in Africa. It has dried up the flow of resources to the continent and has driven our countries into a vicious circle of poverty and social and political crisis.

We must ask how we can get Africa out of that vicious circle of poverty and political crisis, and how we can rectify the errors of the past while preserving the accomplishments of democracy. The gravest danger in this difficult situation would be to take measures and impose sanctions that would exacerbate the economic crisis and paralyse State institutions. When during a precarious period a State is unable to shoulder its responsibilities, social breakup is inevitable and conflicts will break out, bringing with them destruction, bloodshed and dire poverty.

The international community is thus obliged to take measures to contain the crisis and prevent a conflagration in the region, to manage flows of refugees and displaced persons and to try to bring the belligerents to the negotiating table by sending more mediation and good offices missions.

But as the Secretary-General has so rightly stressed, it is time for the General Assembly to replace the culture of reaction with a culture of prevention. Such a culture of prevention not only means respect for and promotion of human rights, good governance and peaceful settlement of disputes, it also implies, above all, the struggle against inequalities and poverty.

As this century comes to an end, Africa needs the mobilization of the international community to make economic recovery possible. Generous initiatives, like the Marshall Plan, must be taken for Africa in order to provide it with a reliable basis for development and an improved economic situation. The international community must increase resources, forgive external debts, diversify crops and ensure remunerative prices for African countries' export products.

It is time the African countries were given a chance to get out of the vicious circle of poverty and political and social crisis. It is time to seriously examine the possibility of promoting genuine peace based on economic and social development and access to food, to health, to education and to basic social services for all African populations.

If Africa is supported in its development efforts by a massive action such as the one launched for the new democracies in Europe, I am sure we shall witness the renaissance of Africa in the decade to come. Without development, there is no durable peace.

To conclude, I would like to stress that my delegation supports the proposal of creating a working group that would examine in detail all aspects of the Secretary-General's report and make recommendations to the Assembly.

Mr. Sharma (India): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for the informative report contained in document A/54/133. We also welcome the productive discussions during the last session of the Economic and Social Council on this report, which led to the adoption of agreed conclusions 1999/2, as well as to decision 1999/270, regarding the inclusion of these discussions and the agreed conclusions as an integral part of the reports and issues to be considered by the open-ended ad hoc working group of the General Assembly soon to be constituted.

India and Africa are inextricably and intimately bound by ties of history, age-old commerce, civilizational links and shared experience and aspirations. Both have been victims of disempowerment, deprivation and exploitation brought through the colonial experience. They are joined by their struggle for freedom. Both face gargantuan development challenges. What happens in Africa is of abiding concern to us.

India has always attached the highest priority to its cooperation with Africa, which, we hope, stands as a true example of the spirit of South-South cooperation. A primary instrument of our technical cooperation with countries of Africa has been the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC). About 20,000 foreign nominees, primarily from Africa, have received training in India under this programme in diverse fields including banking, foreign trade, hydrology and water resources, communications, electronics, satellite imaging, agriculture, small and medium industry, software, renewable energy sources and other areas. Every year, in some of our best educational institutions, we provide a total of 1,350 training slots, of which nearly 60 per cent are reserved for nominees from African countries.

ITEC also implements a variety of technical assistance projects in Africa. Training and mutual cooperation in the fields of human rights machinery, conduct of elections, parliamentary procedure and public sector administration are also an important component of our multifaceted relationship. Bilateral joint commissions have been developed with numerous countries in Africa to pursue the full range of cooperation in a methodical manner. Several Indian companies have established joint ventures in Africa, which bring capital, upgrade technology levels and promote job creation. Indian industry is involved in a significant way in the development of African infrastructure in sectors such as railways. There are over 16,000 students from Africa in Indian universities, availing themselves of the same highly subsidized costs of higher education as are applicable to Indian students. Ever since our independence, half a century ago, we have not believed our liberation complete without the liberation of Africa. We have also believed that, in the pursuit of self-reliance, which has informed our economic, scientific and technological policy, gains made by us are available to be shared by our developing country partners, particularly in Africa.

In line with the Secretary-General's recommendations related to regional cooperation, India is also closely involved with efforts of African countries in this direction. With our experience in South Asia, we fully recognize the advantages to be derived from enhanced regional cooperation and the creation of free trade areas. We have concluded a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and are discussing a similar memorandum of understanding with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We propose substantially to enhance our mutually beneficial links with other African regional and subregional organizations. India also participates actively in the African Development Bank as a full member.

Even the reversal of Africa's economic decline last year and the more optimistic projections for 1999 and 2000 are unlikely to make an effective dent in the levels of poverty, which would require a growth rate of 7 per cent per annum. Without growth, there can be no sustained increase in household or Government spending, in private or public capital formation, in health or social welfare. After all, distributive justice cannot imply distribution of poverty, just as sustainable development cannot mean the sustainment of poverty and deprivation. This maxim is all the more true in Africa, which is one of the few regions that suffered a decline in per capita income over the last 20 years, from $770 in 1980 to $667 in 1997. The close linkage between income and well-being is also brought out in the report of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), which shows that eight of the best performers in the Borda rankings for Africa were also among the top 10 in terms of per capita income.

It is disappointing that the main contributor to growth continues to be the agricultural sector, frequently subjected to the vagaries of climatic conditions. In fact, the rate of industrial expansion in Africa actually declined from 3.4 per cent in 1997 to 2.6 per cent in 1998. The brunt of the Asian financial crisis seems to have been borne by the oil-producing and mining sectors of African countries, which were hard hit by a 32 per cent fall in oil prices during 1998. Although net oil-importing countries benefited from falling oil prices, the region overall was

a net loser in terms of output and revenue. We fully share the view on the constraints on Africa's industrialization, including difficulties associated with access to technologies, that were highlighted by the President of the General Assembly on Africa Industrialization Day last month. Like him, we believe that responding to the call "From farm to factory for a better future" would not only promote increasing the value of Africa's natural resources, but also lead to increased agricultural productivity. We hope that the importance attached by the Economic and Social Council to the industrialization of the African countries and the diversification of their mineral sectors will lead to concrete initiatives on the part of the international community to respond effectively to these challenges.

Last year the Secretary-General emphasized the importance of export-led growth for Africa. In fact, the ratio of Africa's exports to its gross domestic product is much higher than that of Latin America. But this has not done much for African growth, since African countries are basically primary produce exporters that have suffered sharp deteriorations in terms of trade. This clearly attests to the disadvantages faced by Africa in dealing with an increasingly globalized world. The integration of African countries in the world markets alone will not serve much useful purpose until the terms of integration are beneficial to them. As the latest *Human Development Report* published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) tellingly states, Africa's exports are still mainly in the primary commodities, so the region's apparent integration is actually a vulnerability to the whims of the primary commodity markets.

Rising levels of protectionism in developed country markets, frequent and unjustified use of anti-dumping duties and countervailing measures, tariff escalation and tariff peaks — all these things work to negate the comparative advantage and competitive advantage of enterprises in all developing countries, especially in Africa. For instance, how can a farmer in Africa effectively compete with his Western counterpart when the latter received an average annual subsidy of $25,000 in 1996 and when the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) spends the equivalent of 65 per cent of Africa's total gross domestic product to subsidize its farmers? The international community therefore needs to act in concert to ensure that market access to products and manufactures from Africa is available as an integrated element of the process of development in Africa, as recognized at the last session of the Economic and Social Council.

The best of intentions and goodwill for African economic development have to be matched by the provision of adequate resources. This is the crux of the problem. Eight years ago, in 1991, the United Nations estimated that the external-finance requirements of Africa would be $30 billion in 1992, which would need to be followed by an annual increase of at least 4 per cent. Today, for several reasons, the needs and urgency are far greater. But in fact, the inflow of capital to the African countries steadily declined, from $28.2 billion in 1995 to $20.8 billion in 1996. Assistance from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1997 amounted to only $18.7 billion.

The African continent is a net transferor of resources abroad: the amount transferred is estimated at more than 25 per cent of domestic savings. A UNDP study noted last year that sub-Saharan African Governments transfer to their northern creditors four times what they spend on health care for their people. And this is when the debt is not being fully serviced. This is a compelling demonstration of the shortfall of external resources for achieving internationally agreed development objectives in Africa.

It is abundantly clear that the overall increase in private capital flows to developing countries has largely bypassed Africa. Private loans have virtually ceased for Africa, and the total outstanding short-term private debt was more than $6 billion lower in 1997 than it was in the early years of this decade. While this may improve the debt-servicing profile, it actually demonstrates the inability of financial markets to restore normal credit relations with African countries. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) estimates that resource flows declined from $4.5 billion in 1997 to $3 billion last year as a result of reduced private flows and bilateral credit. Similarly, the total foreign direct investment inflows into Africa have also been modest and fluctuating. This underlines the need for capital-exporting countries to eliminate any restrictions, formal or informal, on investments in African countries.

The ECA has clearly documented that for Africa as a whole an investment of 33 per cent of gross domestic product would be required to reach the objective of reducing the proportion of people living in poverty by 4 per cent every year. As domestic savings are estimated at 15 per cent of gross domestic product and official development assistance at another 9 per cent, this leaves a financing gap of 9 per cent of gross domestic product, which must be met through additional external resources.

In most developing economies that have experienced significant acceleration of growth, this gap was never more than 2 to 3 per cent. This underlines the special attention required by Africa, but an adequate response to this by the international community is yet to be seen.

The situation is further complicated by the unwillingness of the foreign Governments in whose banks lies the preponderant portion of the massive amounts funnelled away from the African countries to make efforts to return this capital to those to whom it rightly belongs — the people of Africa. The Secretary-General's report entitled "Summary of the economic and social situation in Africa 1998" (E/1999/16) estimated that the capital flight from Africa is as high as $22 billion. Africa urgently and desperately needs these funds, not only for development, but also to further its valiant efforts to staunch corruption and to ensure that the bribes of a corrupt international economic system do not impair the development of the honest people of Africa.

The elements of effective, transparent and accountable governance, responsive to the needs and priorities of the governed, are important, as are decentralization and the taking of decisions at those levels where they have the greatest effect. But as the President of our Assembly said a few days ago,

> "good governance and macroeconomic management per se will not transform the industrial landscape in Africa, nor will they put in place the fundamental prerequisites for partnership in a globalized economy." *(A/54/PV.58, p. 1)*

We strongly believe that linking all assistance and investment to subjective judgements regarding the promotion and protection of human rights will promote neither human rights nor prosperity. We shall continue to actively discourage such a mode of thinking.

We have noted the follow-up activities outlined in section III of the report. We commend the Roll Back Malaria initiative, as coping with this disease is not only a health concern, but also a major issue for social and economic development. The adverse economic impact of malaria has been estimated at more than 1 per cent of the gross domestic product, magnifying the 9 per cent financing gap. Similar support must be extended through various initiatives to deal with the spread of HIV/AIDS. The problem of children orphaned by AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa is a telling reminder of the social impact of this pandemic, the effects of which are compounded by the high costs of drugs for treatment of HIV/AIDS. Generic drugs are available from developing countries at less than half the price, but the demand of rent from multinationals under a rigid intellectual property rights regime will not allow relief to needy HIV/AIDS sufferers and thus imposes on Africa an unnecessary financial burden amounting to billions of dollars.

We welcome the thought being given to innovative public financing mechanisms to harness and mobilize scientific and technological resources towards defeating the diseases of developing societies. We welcome the conceptual contributions of Professor Jeffrey Sachs of the Harvard Institute of International Development and the Center for International Development to this highly laudable goal.

Our views on the pilot phase of the Comprehensive Development Framework of the World Bank, currently being voluntarily undertaken by some countries, are well known. There are concerns among developing countries that the framework could emerge as an instrument of conditionality at a later stage and restrict their freedom of decision-making. Several such questions have been raised in the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank and answers are still being sought. We therefore believe it is premature to seek support for recommendations seeking ways of collaborating with the Comprehensive Development Framework in the context of the process of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), as is suggested in paragraph 101 of the Secretary-General's report.

We have noted with interest the stated improvements in coordination within the United Nations system of activities for the implementation of the New Agenda. But coordination is pointless when donors increasingly take unilateral action. The process then ends up coordinating the recipients alone, making a mockery of the supposedly country-driven nature of operational activities. Therefore, the crucial issue of ensuring full ownership through the involvement of all recipient countries, as mentioned by the Secretary-General, deserves highest priority. We need to move away from prescriptive approaches, resist advancing our own ideologies and predilections, respect the priority areas identified by the African countries themselves and determine areas of focus and concentration through this interchange. As the Economic and Social Council decided, the ranking of priorities for partnership must be based on an African-driven agenda and on ownership by the African countries and should

take place at the national and local levels in cooperation with development partners and civil society.

Policy naturally flows from analysis, which in turn has to be grounded in objective facts. While we have relied on the more optimistic figures of economic growth for last year, as indicated in the report of the ECA, we find that the report of the Secretary-General presents a darker picture. For example, the ECA report indicates that gross domestic product grew by 3.3 per cent in 1998, characterizing it as the highest of any region in the world, whereas the figures in the Secretary-General's report for the same periods are 2.5 per cent and the report bemoans the second consecutive yearly decline in the growth rate. We had hoped that the data provided in the reports would not vary so widely, as they make it difficult for Member States to judge the situation exactly and to suggest the approaches required, factoring in the subregional variations to adopt positive supportive policies. We hope that the open-ended ad hoc working group will accord adequate importance to these issues in its deliberations.

We are convinced that, given Africa's resources and limitless potential, it has the capacity to emerge as a major global force in the coming century. Knowing well the determination and will of the African countries, what is needed is the willingness of the international community to come forward in true partnership for African development. India would be privileged to be a partner in this great and historic enterprise and pledges to play a useful and constructive role, along with other countries, in the open-ended ad hoc working group.

Mr. Jasmi (Malaysia): My delegation is most grateful for the opportunity to deliberate on this agenda item once again in this Assembly. A little over two months ago, the situation in Africa was also the focus of Security Council deliberations and the consideration of this item today in the General Assembly underlines the importance States Members of this Organization attach to the continued well-being of Africa. Given the complexity of the issues pertaining to Africa, they must be dealt with in a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated manner if the international community intends to have a significant impact on the African situation.

We welcome the Secretary-General's progress report before us in document A/54/133. The report outlines various follow-up actions that have been initiated or completed in the areas of peace and security, as well as in development and related areas, in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on Africa of April 1998.

Mr. Bouah-Kamon (Côte d'Ivoire), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Against the backdrop of the ongoing conflicts in Africa, it is imperative that the international community make sincere and concerted efforts to close the chapter of violence which has traumatized the majority of the people of the African continent for so long. Africa's wars have not only resulted in death and destruction, but have also created more than 8 million refugees and internally displaced persons, further damaging what are already the weakest and most fragile economies in the world. We are therefore heartened by recent efforts at peacemaking in both Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and hope that they will prove successful. In this regard, Malaysia applauds Africa's efforts to establish the appropriate mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts at both the regional and the subregional levels. Clearly, regional and subregional organizations have an important role to play in preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes, particularly in the context of the ongoing conflicts in Africa.

In this connection, due recognition must be given to the important roles played by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, among others. We particularly welcome the outcome of the thirty-fifth OAU summit in Algiers last July and its expressed desire for a renewal of the spirit of Africa. We agree that Africa, like other regions, must learn from the lessons of the past and move forward to face the challenges of the new millennium. African countries have the right and obligation to take charge of their own destinies with, of course, the continued and sustained support and assistance of the international community.

In the context of the Security Council, African issues continue to dominate much of its work. However, many continue to be sceptical about the commitment and resolve of the Council to intervene in conflict situations in Africa. This impression was reinforced by the way the international community reacted promptly in addressing the conflicts in Kosovo and East Timor earlier this year; yet was reticent in respect of Africa. Indeed, throughout the better part of the 1990s, the Council was hesitant and reluctant to play a more active role in Africa, particularly

following its failed intervention in Somalia and the subsequent non-action in respect of the Rwandan situation, which resulted in the horrific genocide there. It was not until 1998 that the Council finally began to engage itself in peacekeeping efforts in the continent. It is our hope that the Council will live up to its Charter obligations and avoid past reluctance and indecisiveness when faced with similar situations in the future. As a current member of the Council, Malaysia will continue to do its part to ensure that the Council establishes a clear criterion for authorizing peacekeeping and enforcement action whenever situations arise, regardless of their geographical locations.

In this regard, we cannot but agree with those who look at the Council's actions vis-à-vis the Democratic Republic of the Congo as being the benchmark for determining the Council's continued commitment to engagement in African conflicts as a whole. The recent adoption of Security Council resolution 1279 (1999) is important in that it would allow the Secretary-General to begin the necessary preparations for the next phase of United Nations involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo presents the Organization with one of its most daunting challenges, given the nature and complexity of the conflict, as well as the country's sheer size. Any peacekeeping mission to be established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will necessarily have to be substantial and will probably be the biggest operation undertaken in the history of the Organization so far. However, for it to be successful, the mission must be provided with all the necessary financial and logistical assistance from the international community.

It is a truism that there cannot be peace without development. We note that in his progress report the Secretary-General has continued to stress the obvious linkage between the two. It is an undeniable fact that economic and social problems are among the root causes of conflict, and the challenge that awaits the international community is whether we have the ability and, more importantly, the political will to meaningfully address the perennial question of sustaining and enhancing development in Africa. The persistence of poverty impedes efforts for long-term peace and security. The international community must assist the African economies to grow, alleviate the disease, poverty and hunger suffered by millions and encourage the peoples of the affected regions of Africa to fully utilize their potential to provide a better future for their children. We should also endeavour to conceive a concrete strategy that identifies specific measures to be pursued towards meeting that objective.

Political stability is a critical factor in attracting the foreign investment and capital essential for sustained development and growth. In the absence of such conditions, many of the developing countries in Africa will find it impossible to embark upon serious development programmes. The continent still lags behind the target of 6 per cent growth in gross national product per annum, as set by the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

International cooperation and assistance are imperative if Africa is to recover and set its course on the path towards development. Market access is an important factor in efforts to regenerate growth and development in Africa. In the increasingly globalized world we live in today, the continued marginalization of Africa will be further aggravated unless urgent efforts are made to ensure that the African economies are integrated into the global trading regime.

Equally important is the perennial issue of the crippling external debt of the African countries, the servicing of which accounts for a third of their export earnings. Such debts impede public investment in physical infrastructure and human resources. They also impede foreign direct investment. In this regard, we welcome the efforts being made for comprehensive debt relief, including through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, whereby poor countries with unsustainable debt burdens are provided with coordinated debt relief. My delegation strongly supports the call by the Secretary-General for consideration of converting into grants official bilateral debts owed by the poorest African nations.

We also note with concern the continued decline of official development assistance. This trend has to be reversed if Africa is to recover from its present state. Disappointingly, only a small number of countries have consistently met the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product agreed to at the 1992 Rio Summit. In order to escape the cycle of poverty and debt, Africa urgently needs the world's trade, open economies and foreign investment. Declining official development assistance and minimal foreign investment in the continent are likely to prolong Africa's underdevelopment.

We call on the industrialized countries to arrest the syndrome of donor fatigue for Africa. At the same time, African Governments must give due consideration to a reduction in their defence budgets, in particular that

which relates to arms purchases. The substantial amounts spent on arms purchases should be utilized for more productive purposes. A strong commitment to that objective would generate greater confidence on the part of Africa's external partners with regard to making available badly needed foreign investment and assistance.

At the same time, the importance of the ongoing democratization process, good governance and sustainable development cannot be underscored as prerequisites for durable peace and the promotion of economic growth. We view the initiative by the Organization aimed at confidence-building and promoting common security and development in Africa as a major step in the right direction. Reforms, we believe, would necessarily lead to increased aid. In this connection, my delegation welcomes the proposal by the Secretary-General for the Assembly to establish a working group, as provided for in resolution 53/92, to take stock of the progress made so far in the implementation of the proposals contained in the report on Africa and to consolidate and ensure coherence in efforts to implement these proposals further.

Malaysia greatly values its traditional friendly ties with Africa. We are gratified to see the many positive developments in much of Africa since it rid itself of colonialism, which occurred at about the same time as Malaysia's own independence. We are proud of our long-standing bonds of friendship and cooperation with many African countries and look forward to further consolidating our solidarity with Africa in concrete ways.

In the spirit of South-South cooperation, Malaysia has, since 1981, maintained a Technical Cooperation Programme with our partners in the South. To date, there have been about 4,000 participants, mainly from Africa, who have undergone short- and medium-term training in the public administration and technical fields in Malaysia. We have also developed economic relations with certain African countries based on the concept of "smart partnership" — that is, partnership involving Governments and private sectors with the goal of promoting sound and sustainable economic activities to ensure win-win relationships for all.

In conclusion, my delegation would urge the international community, particularly the developed world, to do more for Africa as it faces up to the challenges of the new century and millennium. The international community will be judged by the actions it takes rather than its declarations of intent. On their part, African countries must manifest the necessary political will to overcome their problems and to put the interests of their peoples first if they are to realize their vast potential.

Ms. Korpi (Finland): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Liechtenstein, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the Secretary-General's progress report (S/1999/1008) on the implementation of the recommendations contained in his report of last year entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (A/52/871). The European Union supports the Secretary-General's strong advocacy for development in Africa and his efforts to mobilize the international community in support of these efforts. The European Union emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive follow-up to the Secretary-General's recommendations in all concerned forums and, in this respect, takes positive note of the measures and initiatives already taken.

The European Union welcomes the renewed commitment of the Security Council to contribute to conflict resolution in Africa. We also welcome the Council's determination to improve further its ability to prevent conflicts and to make its responses more efficient and effective. The active preventive diplomacy of the Secretary-General himself is also commended.

The primary responsibility for the future of Africa rests with the African nations, although it is also essential that international support be given. We commend efforts by African leaders and States and the regional and subregional organizations, in particular the Organization of African Unity (OAU), as well as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC); and we call on all of them to intensify and continue these efforts to resolve conflicts and to build peace. Interactive dialogue on continental and subregional security, which rely on existing regional cooperative arrangements, should be further encouraged. The cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in Africa should be enhanced.

The European Union stands ready to continue to assist capacity-building for conflict prevention in Africa. In this context, it adopted a common position on 15 November 1999 to support the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the process towards peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including by contributing to the Joint Military Commission through the OAU. At the same time, we wish to express our support for peace-building measures already taken by the African organizations.

We welcome the adoption by the OAU of its programme for strengthening the conflict management centre, presented to donors in November this year, and call on States to give support in this regard.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the signs, reported by the Secretary-General, that during 1998 and 1999 there was a significant increase in the purchase of arms and munitions by a number of African States.

We attach great importance to preventive disarmament. We have adopted a joint action on small arms and light weapons as a complementary measure to our programme for preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms. Combating the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons is also an integral part of our emergency, reconstruction and development programmes.

The European Union strongly believes that in the search for a long-term solution to conflicts in Africa, and in order to limit immediate human suffering, high priority must be given to curbing arms supplies and the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Full attention should be given to examining measures to suppress the illegal trade in diamonds, gold and other precious materials which are used to pay for those weapons. The European Union encourages the Security Council and regional and subregional organizations to consider using their powers in a more decisive and efficient way to impose and to ensure the implementation of existing arms embargoes. We welcome the adoption of the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Import, Export and Manufacturing of Small Arms, which came into effect in November 1998, and we call upon all States in the region to take all steps to implement this Moratorium, in particular to establish national committees to combat small arms proliferation.

The European Union would like to commend the recent OAU summit for its decision to convene a regional conference on small arms in order to agree on specific recommendations for halting their use, transfer and illegal manufacturing. We also note the positive steps being taken by some African nations to increase public awareness of the dangers of small arms and, in particular, in relation to children. We welcome the Neighbourhood Initiative of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the inclusion of children's concerns in peace agendas.

The European Union believes that the international community should make the most effective use of the instruments at its disposal to address conflicts in Africa. International sanctions, including those mandated by the Security Council, are most effective when targeted on those who bear the primary responsibility for initiating and perpetrating conflicts. Where sanctions are imposed, appropriate humanitarian exemptions should be included from the outset, and the impact of sanctions should be continuously monitored and analysed so that adjustments can be made.

As a consequence of armed conflicts, Africa is suffering from massive displacements of civilian population. Protection of refugees, in particular children and women, is important. The efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Action for the Rights of Children Training Programme, which includes a specific age-gender perspective, are commendable.

We agree with the great concern of the Secretary-General about the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. It is now generally recognized that the efforts to combat the epidemic are impeded by the increase in the number of conflicts in Africa. The European Union fully supports the efforts by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other sponsors of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), including within the context of the international partnership against AIDS in Africa, to be launched in May 2000 to address this problem within the overall framework of population and development and of public health. In view of the fact that HIV-positive women and girls already outnumber men in Africa, the European Union welcomes the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) African Girls' Education Initiative as a priority component of the global girls' education programme. The Programme of Action for the Decade of Education by the African Ministers of Education and the OAU summit in Algiers also acknowledged the need for education about HIV/AIDS. Knowledge is and will remain the best preventive method against this deadly disease.

The boundary between humanitarian crises and the development situation is not easy to define, and therefore, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has recommended that those selected for resident coordinator posts also have the required skills to fulfil the functions of humanitarian coordinators in African countries facing humanitarian challenges. This linkage between relief and development was particularly emphasized at the 1999 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in its humanitarian segment. Likewise, in the operational activities segment a greater coherence and linkage between the consolidated appeals process and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework was emphasized. Close cooperation between these two systems could be conducive to joint planning.

The Secretary-General's progress report points out clearly the positive relation between good governance practices and the consolidation of peace and democratic processes and national reconciliation efforts. The European Union acknowledges the many initiatives taken by several United Nations and other international organizations towards enhancing the regional and country-level capacities of respective organizations and Governments with regard to human rights action plans.

The Secretary-General rightly points out the need to rethink international aid and to intensify international efforts for more effective and efficient debt relief measures. These aspects have been dealt with extensively under appropriate agenda items in the Second Committee, and in this connection the European Union would like to express general support for the ideas expressed by the Secretary-General. We would also like to note the several new initiatives adopted by the international community to bring deeper, broader and faster debt relief to the heavily indebted poor countries.

Development needs economic activity and growth. As so well pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General, the creation of a positive environment for investment and for better competitiveness is crucial. Opportunities offered by Africa should be made known to investors.

Investments also require human resources. The efforts made by the United Nations, within the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative, are important, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, in which the lowest rate of primary school enrolment and extremely low female literacy rates are registered. The Programme of Action of the Decade of Education adopted by the African Ministers of Education, endorsed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Algiers, is commendable, in particular as it places special emphasis on the education of the girl child, child soldiers, refugees and displaced children.

Sustainable development and overcoming poverty require, among other things, social justice and employment opportunities. The European Union notes the positive initiatives taken by the Economic Commission for Africa in preparing the report "Status of women in Africa, 1998" with the aim of implementing the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and the Beijing Platform for Action.

We welcome the favourable response from the OAU to the European Union's proposal for the holding in April 2000 of a summit of Heads of State or Government of the European Union and of Africa. We have started the preparations for the summit, which should adopt a balanced approach between political and economic issues reflecting the global nature of the European Union-Africa partnership in order to ensure concrete results.

Building on the long-term cooperation and relationship between the European Union and African countries, we are prepared to continue to strengthen our forward-looking partnership with Africa, with a view to ensuring peace and stability; the promotion of and respect for human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance; combating poverty; promoting social and human development; securing sustained development and economic growth; increasing economic activities; protecting the environment; and enhancing cultural exchanges.

Finally, we would like to pay special tribute to African countries, organizations and statesmen that are making untiring efforts for peacemaking at continental and regional levels. We would also like to call for early implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): Our deliberations in the Assembly today on agenda item 46 reflect the continuing significance that the international community accords to issues concerning the continent of Africa.

Let me first express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his series of reports concerning Africa, including his report in document A/54/133, entitled "Development of Africa: implementation of the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council and the General Assembly,

specifically the implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on Africa". This report facilitated the discussion during the coordination segment of the 1999 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and provided a unique opportunity to take stock of achievements and progress made by the people of Africa, while also focusing attention on the need for enhanced international cooperation for the establishment of a partnership between that continent with the rest of the world based on mutual benefit and prosperity.

Today, at the threshold of the new millennium, Africa is closer to attaining its goals of stable peace and economic prosperity. It is gratifying to note that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations in Africa are playing an increasingly important role in the resolution of conflicts. However, this should not relieve the relevant body of the United Nations of its obligation under the Charter for the maintenance of peace and security. In this regard, the appointment of special envoys and representatives of the Secretary-General, meetings of contact groups and special conferences on Africa have further bolstered the search to identify the sources of conflicts and to increase the possibility of attaining viable settlements.

The question of peace and security in Africa is intrinsically linked with economic growth and development. We fully agree with the Secretary-General in his progress report (S/1999/1008) to the Security Council of 25 September 1999 that conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building are meaningless unless they enable a society to develop. It would be most beneficial if that report of the Secretary-General to the Council could also be distributed as a General Assembly document, since it touches upon the issues of development.

The past decade has been a mixed one, with Africa at times registering virtual economic stagnation and at other times only modest progress. And Africa still faces horrendous development constraints. In this context, the Secretary-General's report has put forward recommendations on a number of core issues on which progress must be achieved. While some efforts have shown results, as indicated in the Secretary-General's reports on Africa, others, such as the endeavour to increase market access for African exports in the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Lomé Convention, still need to be pursued.

Likewise, financial flows, particularly multilateral financial flows for development in Africa, have been negatively affected by globalization. Since only a very small percentage of foreign direct investment flows to Africa, many African countries that are unable to tap into such flows run the risk of being further marginalized.

The matter of external indebtedness if closely associated with appropriate development financing and is an unbearable constraint on revitalizing African growth and development. Despite the many initiatives undertaken, particularly the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, Africa's debt stock continues to increase. In this regard, we look forward to the implementation of the recent Cologne debt initiative adopted by the Group of Eight in June this year, which is a significant step towards cutting the debt burden of some of the world's poorest.

While such debt relief and cancellation initiatives are critically needed, they form only part of a much-needed overall integrated strategy to ensure a return to sustained growth and sustainable development. In this regard, Indonesia supports the call from the OAU for an international agreement to clear the entire debt stock of the poorest countries in Africa. This would greatly help revitalize the economic performance of these countries and put them back on the path of development. Likewise, we see merit in the proposal for creditor countries to convert the remaining official bilateral debt of the poorest African countries into grants.

Furthermore, in the endeavour to maintain credible economic growth and social development, particularly in Africa, the World Summit for Social Development called, *inter alia*, for action to achieve the goal of full employment by implementing appropriate economic and social policies aimed at attaining sustainable livelihood through freely chosen productive employment methods.

If the international community is committed to these objectives, aid in all forms should be given to improve the health-care needs of the African people. Moreover, efforts to combat illiteracy on the continent are to be commended, for these measures constitute the driving force of development.

In this light, therefore, greater efforts should be made by the international community, equal to those it has made in other parts of the world, to redress and seek solutions to the problems of Africa.

Finally, in the context of a new dialogue and partnership between the international community and the African continent, Indonesia remains firmly committed to assisting its partners in Africa in achieving their vision of a peaceful and prosperous Africa. That support has been consistently reflected in Indonesia's support of Africa's objectives through our active participation in many international and regional forums, including our participation in various peacekeeping operations and in South-South cooperation, as well as through the strong bilateral relations that Indonesia maintains throughout the continent.

Mr. Mmualefe (Botswana): Last year we welcomed with open hearts and much optimism the report (A/52/871) of the Secretary-General on the subject of causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We did so out of our sincere appreciation for the comprehensive manner in which the Secretary-General approached this important subject. We wish to state here our continued desire to see the United Nations move along that path.

While the prevention and management of conflicts and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa are indeed our responsibility as Africans, we also wish to point out that it is a responsibility that has to be shared with other members of the international community. As a delegation, however, we have always held the view that as we exhort others to come to our aid, we should also do our utmost as Africans to put our house in order so that the help we receive can be put to better use.

We will be the first to admit that efforts aimed at attaining durable peace and sustainable development in our continent will come to naught if they continue to be disrupted by armed conflicts. Thus, we need to tread the path we set for ourselves in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and through subregional organizations to settle disputes through peaceful means. As African countries, we need not shy away from seeking mediation where disputes appear to be taking a turn for the worse — that is, towards armed conflict.

Lack of tolerance within our borders born out of ethnic rivalry and antipathy or hostility is one of the major sources of conflict in Africa. It thus behoves us as Africans to continuously work harder at building societies wherein our diversity is appreciated as an enriching phenomenon rather than being considered an element for the promotion of the narrow interests of one group at the expense of another.

Furthermore, the current pace of establishing a culture of transparency and accountable governance in most parts of the continent needs to be maintained. The understandings reached and decisions made at Algiers during the recent OAU summit are good signs in this regard. Governance that is rampant with corruption and unaccountable to the masses of our people has too often led to the wasting of the resources necessary for the economic development of our countries and the attendant societal instability.

I stated earlier that as Africans we should be the first to take responsibility for the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development. We also look forward to concrete assistance from the international community. We cannot fail to note that in spite of our commitment as countries to reorganize and restructure our economies, we are continuously faced with the serious deterioration of the terms of trade, declining official development assistance, the low level of the flow of foreign direct investment, the crushing debt burden and the lack of sufficient access for important African goods, such as agricultural products, textiles, clothing and leather products, to the markets of developed countries.

In our view, and, indeed, as is recognized in this body, better terms of trade and increased flows of foreign direct investment are necessary for the economic uplifting of Africa. As Africans, we have liberalized our economies in order to improve our efficiency and maximize opportunities for investors, and this liberalization will be meaningful and sustainable only if it is matched by appropriate flows of foreign direct investment. We wish to encourage our development partners and the various international organizations — such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Bank — to continue in their efforts aimed at publicizing investment opportunities in Africa and building capacities of African institutions dealing with trade and investment.

Better access to the markets of developed countries for African goods through the lowering and removal of tariffs is also paramount. This is particularly so because better returns for our exports will enable us to generate the resources that are vital for sustained economic growth. The sustained growth of our economies is also in

the interest of the industrialized countries, since the opportunities it creates could enable our Governments to spread social services more equitably, thus creating an environment conducive to the maintenance of peace.

The crushing levels of debt and the costs attendant to its servicing is another serious obstacle faced by African countries. While we appreciate various initiatives at the multilateral and bilateral levels aimed at reducing the debts of heavily indebted poor countries, we wish to add our voice to those that have expressed the desire for there to be more debt cancellation. The amounts used for debt servicing do indeed take a heavy toll on a country's resources and also on its ability to adequately provide necessary social services, such as education and health.

In addition to the crushing debt burden, developing countries, particularly those in Africa, are faced with ever-decreasing levels of official development assistance. While the need for increased foreign direct investment remains paramount, we also wish to point out that our developed partners should continue to assist us and reverse the current trend of the decline in official development assistance. As most of our economies have been and continue to be restructured, we cannot fail to underline the fact that assistance will continue to be required.

The situation of refugees and displaced persons in Africa also remains a big challenge to our efforts for durable peace and sustainable development. Not only are great numbers of these people deprived of a dignified existence, but their situation also puts a burden on host countries. We appeal to the Member States of this body not only to increase the resources necessary for the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees but also to continue extending their assistance to host countries.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the OAU, and continued assistance by the international community to the latter, are also essential to the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We are glad that this morning the General Assembly was able to adopt a resolution in this regard.

The prevalence of illicit traffic in small arms in Africa is also a challenge to the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in the continent. It is our hope that the upcoming conference on illicit traffic in small arms in all its aspects will be not just a place to talk shop but an opportunity that will be exploited so that we can come up with concrete measures to stem the tide. In the meantime, we wish to appeal to arms-producing countries to put in place mechanisms which will ensure that arms dealers sell only to legitimate buyers. Efforts by the Secretariat aimed at addressing this problem will enjoy the support of our delegation.

Let me conclude by saying that as Africans, we should, and do, recognize our responsibility to promote durable peace and sustainable development on our own continent. However, of necessity, our efforts should be accompanied by an equal commitment by other members of the international community to facilitate and assist.

The meeting rose at 7.10 p.m.